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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 RPO DUBAI 000551

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SUBJECT: IRAN'S ASHURA AFTERSHOCKS CONTINUE

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CLASSIFIED BY: Charles Pennypacker, Consular Officer, DOS, IRPO;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Two days after the violent December 27 Ashura demonstrations in Tehran and other cities, the government continues to arrest and detain more, largely 'second-tier' reformists and their friends and family (to include Shirin Ebadi's sister), while regime stalwarts have begun condemning Ashura day 'seditionists and rioters.' Iran's 'Supreme Council for Islamic Proselytizing' has announced a December 30 demonstration 'in Tehran and throughout the country' to protest the sanctity-smashing' actions of the Ashura 'seditionists.' There are isolated and unsubstantiated reports of increased student activity (both pro- and anti-regime) in some of Tehran's universities. Two days after the worst violence since the fraudulent June elections, the regime seems to have reverted to its Kabuki-esque playbook, rounding up the usual reformist suspects while also issuing perfervid yet essentially perfunctory denunciations against its ever-increasing 'enemies.' For the moment at least the regime seems content to do what it does best in order to deal with the Ashura-day events. END SUMMARY.

'ROUND UP THE USUAL SUSPECTS'

12. (U) Two days after the violent December 27 Ashura demonstrations in Tehran and other cities, more news of Ashura-day and post-Ashura violence, arrests and detentions continues to emerge. The most detailed (if not necessarily credible) news coming mainly from oppositionist websites such as 'Rah-e Sabz, affiliated with dissident cleric Mohsen Kadivar. Incidents cited in foreign and oppositionist press include the following:

- the car containing Mehdi Karrubi and family members was attacked and extensively damaged while leaving Ashura day ceremonies at Ghaffari Mosque in Tehran (December 27);

- increased security presence was noted in central Tehran, with police closing selected metro stations, and with reports of scattered clashes, to include around 'Haft Tir' Square (afternoon, December 28);

- some detainees were taken to the infamous Meqdad detention center

on Azadi Street, where they were beaten and threatened (December 27-28);

- mid-day December 28 security officials stormed the office of reformist weekly 'Irandozht,' whose editor is reformist journalist Mahmoud Quchani (the son-in-law of Emadaldin Baghi) and after a thorough search, confiscated all the computers (December 28);

- Prominent student activist Heshmat Tabarzadi (who had already done a seven year prison term) was arrested by intelligence officials at his home (December 28);

- Abolfazl Ghadyani, prominent member of the reformist 'Mujahedin of the Islamic Revolution' party (NOTE: 'MIRO'- not to be confused with the 'MEK') party, was arrested (December 28);

- Security went to the home of MIRO spokesman Mohsen Armin to arrest him, but he wasn't at home (December 28);

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- MIRO Central Council member Behzad Nabavi (NOTE: a particular bC*te noire for Iran's hardline conservatives), already imprisoned but on the fourth day of temporary release for medical treatment, was returned to Evin Prison before the treatment started (December 28);

- Mohammad Taheri, husband of Khomeini's grand-child and son of prominent dissident cleric Grand Ayatollah Seyyed Jalaladdin Taheri, was arrested (December 28) ;

- Reformist journalist Mohammad Javad Saberi was taken away by 'plainclothes' (December 27);

- Dr. Nushin Ebadi, sister of Nobel Prize winner Shirin Ebadi, was taken away for 'questioning' by Intelligence officials the night of December 28 and has not been heard from since (December 28);

- Mashallah Shams-ol-Vaezin, the 'father of reformist journalism' in Iran, was arrested (December 29);

- Women's Rights activist Mansureh Shojai and journalist/activist Morteza Kazemian were arrested (December 28).

13. (U) There are isolated and unsubstantiated reports of increased student activity (both pro- and anti-regime) in some of Tehran's universities. On December 29 there were reports of a clash between pro-government and oppositionist students at Tehran's 'Elm o Sanat' ('Science and Industry') University, which had to be broken up by security forces, while according to pro-government websites, pro-government university student groups from Tehran's universities have gathered in front of the Judiciary offices to show support for Supreme Leader Khamenei.

CONDEMNATIONS

¶4. (U) As intelligence and security forces continue their round-up of largely second-tier reformists, pro-regime individuals and organizations have begun to issue public statements, condemning 'the small number of seditionists working towards the regime's overthrow' who sought to 'shatter the sanctity of Ashura,' and calling for 'decisive treatment and maximum punishment' for them. Those issuing pro-government statements included:

- Tehran's 'Rasullollah' IRGC Unit
- The Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics
- Basij Organization Commander General Mohammad Reza Naqdi
- IGC Deputy Commander BG Masoud Jazayeri
- The Guardian Council
- Qom Seminary Teachers Association (the main clerical organization in Iran)
- Society of Combatant Clerics (aka 'Ruhaniat,' the political faction representing conservative clerics)
- The Bazaar-affiliated 'Islamic Coalition Party' (aka 'Motalafeh')

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- The Majlis 'Principlists' faction (NOTE: Majlis members en masse also staged a street march on December 29 in support of the regime)
- Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani
- Expediency Council Secretary Mohsen Rezai
- The Supreme Cultural Council
- Grand Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi
- Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi

¶5. (U) On December 29 Iran's 'Coordinating Council for Islamic Propaganda' announced that there would be a 'large gathering' the afternoon of December 30 at Engalab Square in central Tehran and in other locations 'throughout the country' to protest the 'sanctity-smashing' actions of the Ashura 'seditionists.' Separately, 'Javan' newspaper, an IRGC organ, has called for government supporters to stage a December sit-in across from Mir Hossein Mousavi's office in support of the arrest of Mousavi and Karrubi, after the 1500 hours pro-government march ends. According to the paper the sit-in will continue 'until decisive action by the Judiciary re Mousavi, Karrubi, and the other seditionists.'

DEAD/WOUNDED

¶6. (U) On December 28 the Health Ministry's Public Relations said that in Tehran 60 people had been taken to government hospitals as a result of Ashura-day injuries, with most of them treated on an outpatient basis then subsequently released (reftel - many wounded weren't taken to hospitals for fear of being detained/questioned by

security). That same day the LEF announced the names of the seven men and one woman killed on Ashura, along with their cause of death (see Appendix - note that even in the case of fatalities whose identity were unknown their ages were listed). On December 28 Tehran's Prosecutor General Abbas Jafaari Dolatabadi told press that among the Ashura day fatalities no one died from bullet wounds except one case (aka Mousavi's nephew), which is under investigation. The other deaths were either due to some type of blow, or due to shots from hunting rifles, which Iranian security and LEF did not have.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: Two days after the worst violence since the fraudulent June elections the regime seems to have reverted to its Kabuki-esque playbook, rounding up the usual reformist suspects while also issuing perfervid yet essentially perfunctory denunciations. For the moment at least the regime seems content to do what it does best in order to deal with the Ashura-day events.
END COMMENT.

APPENDIX:

----- NAMES OF DEAD AND CAUSES OF DEATH, PER LEF DEC 28 ANNOUNCEMENT

- ¶1. Mehdi FARHADI RAD, 34 years old; died from 25 buckshot in face
 - ¶2. Mohammad Ali RASEKHI NIA; 40 years old; died from buckshot from hunting rifle
 - ¶3. Amir ARSHADI, 30 years old; unknown cause of death
 - ¶4. Shahram FARJI, 30 years old, unknown cause of death
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- ¶5. Sayyed Ali MOUSAVI HABIBI, 42 years old; died from gunshot
 - ¶6. Jahanbakht PAZOOKI, 50 years old; unknown cause of death
 - ¶7. Unknown male, 31 years old [sic]; died from knife wounds
 - ¶8. Unknown female, 43 years old [sic]; cause of death probable crash or accident
- EYRE